

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO USIA WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 8767

USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 1703

USIAC

BEIRUT ALSO FOR RAPA

E. O. 11652: GDS DECLAS 12/31/79

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION TO BEIRUT RAID

REF: USIA 7094

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1. OVERALL MOROCCAN PRESS (BOTH PRO- GOVERNMENT AND
OPPOSITION) REACTION ISRAELI RAID ON LEBANON CONTINUES TO
BE HEAVILY WEIGHTED ON SIDE OF YASSER ARAFAT' S STATEMENTS
AND PLO PRESS VERSIONS OF INCIDENTS. THUS MOROCCAN PRESS
CONTINUES GIVE HEAVY PLAY TO ALLEGATIONS OF DIRECT AMERICAN
COMPLICITY ON SIDE OF ISRAEL WHILE DOWNPLAYING OFFICIAL
US DENIALS OF COLLUSION. REACTION RTM (RADIO- TELEVISION
MAROCAIN) OFFICIALS IS THAT BEIRUT RAID ANOTHER UNFORTUNATE
TERRORIST ACTION WHICH MUST BE REPORTED FROM ARAB VIEWPOINT
WITHOUT LETTING IT GET OUT OF HAND AND BECOME VIOLENT
INTERNAL ISSUE IN WHICH MOROCCAN PUBLIC MIGHT ATTEMPT
SEEK VENGEANCE ON EITHER AMERICANS OR MOROCCAN JEWISH
COMMUNITY. FOR EXAMPLE, WE HAVE BEEN ASSURED BY RESPONSIBLE
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MOROCCAN RADIO/ TV NEWS EDITOR THAT REPORTING OF INCIDENT WILL REMAIN BALANCED AND FACTUAL WITHOUT RESORTING TO UNFOUNDED, SCURRILOUS ACCUSATIONS AND WITHOUT CALLS FOR VIOLENT REPRISALS AGAINST AMERICANS WHICH SOME OTHER ARAB RADIO SERVICES HAVE BROADCAST. OUR MONITORING OF RADIO AND TELEVISION NEWS BROADCASTS CONFIRMS FACT THAT THESE MEDIA NOT BEING USED AS OUTLET FOR PLO PROPAGANDA. FULL TEXT OF AMEMBASSY BEIRUT COMMUNIQUE WAS CARRIED ON RTM FRENCH AND ARABIC SERVICES.

2. ON OTHER HAND, GENERAL TONE OF MOROCCAN PRESS HAS BEEN HARSH IN ITS CRITICISM OF THE US AND HAS CALLED FOR ARAB SOLIDARITY AND ACTION AGAINST AMERICAN SUPPORT OF ISRAELI "OUTLAWS." EVEN SEMI- OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER, LE MATIN AND MAROC SOIR, NORMALLY RECEPTIVE TO US POSITION ON MIDDLE EAST CRISIS, HAVE CONSPICUOUSLY REFRAINED FROM PUBLISHING TEXTS OF US STATEMENTS ON BEIRUT RAID AS COUNTERBALANCE TO PLACEMENT OF PLO STATEMENTS, WHICH THEY HAVE CARRIED IN FULL AS THOUGHT THEY WERE FACTUAL. DIRECTOR GENERAL, MOULAY AHMED ALAOU, WHO IS ALSO CONSIDERED UNOFFICIAL PALACE SPOKESMAN, COMMENTED IN TWO EDITORIALS THAT US IS INDRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR ISRAELI TERRORIST ACTIONS BECAUSE IT PROVIDES MAJOR PORTION OF MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO ISRAEL. HE ALSO COMPLAINED IN ANOTHER FRONT PAGE ARTICLE IN MAROC SOIR THAT FRANCE HAS BEEN ONLY WESTERN NATION TO CONDEMN OFFICIALLY ISRAEL FOR ITS RAID ON LEBANON.

3. PERSONAL ATTITUDES OF EDITORS AND PUBLISHERS WITH WHOM WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DISCUSS SERIOUS MATTER OF UNBALANCED REPORTING, MAY BE BRIEFLY SUMMARIZED AS FOLLOWS: ABDELKRIM GHALLAB, SHIEF EDITOR OF ISTIQLAL PARTY ARABIC DAILY, AL ALAM, WAS NON- COMMITAL ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT HE WILL PUBLISH ANY MATERIAL THAT MIGHT INDICATE ARAFAT OR PLO NEWS SERVICE (WAFAP) PURVEYORS OF HALFTRUTHS OR OUTRIGHT LIES. FOR EXAMPLE, WHILE HIS PAPER CARRIED DEPARTMENT PRESS SPOKESMAN'S DENIAL OF US INVOLVEMENT IN ISRAELI RAID, IT ADDED THAT SPOKESMAN FORGOT THAT IT WAS KNOWN FACT "17,000 AMERICAN VOLUNTEERS FOUGHT ON ISRAELI SIDE IN 1967 SIX DAY WAR."

4. WE NOT YET ABLE MEET AHMED ALAOU TO DISCUSS MATTER,
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BUT HAVE LEARNED FROM CLOSE JOURNALIST FRIEND OF HIS

THAT HE VERY DISAPPOINTED US GOVERNMENT HAS NOT ISSUED CONDEMNATION OF ISRAELI ACTION. FRIEND SAID, IN STRICT CONFIDENCE, ALAOUI WAS PLANNING WRITE MUCH STRONGER EDITORIAL POINTING OUT THAT US GOVERNMENT QUICK TO CONDEMN ARAB TERRORIST ACTION, BUT REMAINS SILENT WHEN ISRAELIS DO SAME THING. APPARENTLY, ACCORDING TO SAME SOURCE, ALAOUI WAS PERSUADED BY HIGH RANKING GOM OFFICIAL (POSSIBLY MFA BENHIMA) TO TONE DOWN EDITORIAL.

5. DIRECTOR GENERAL OF MOROCCAN WIRE SERVICE (MAP), MEHDI BENNOUNA, SAID MAP FOLLOWED POLICY OF BALANCING PLO MATERIAL WITH US DENIALS. FURTHERMORE, HE HAD RECEIVED REQUEST FROM FOREIGN MINISTER BENHIMA TO CARRY PRESS STORIES FROM US SOURCES AS COUNTERBALANCE TO PLO NEWS RELEASES. MAP HAS CARRIED AMEMBASSY BEIRUT COMMUNIQUE AND WIRELESS FILE ITEMS FROM FRIDAY 'S AF 72. HOWEVER, NO PAPER AS YET HAS PUBLISHED THE MAP ITEMS IN QUESTION. CHIEF EDITOR OF MAP, ABDELJELIL FENJIRO, SAID HE UNDER PRESSURE FROM OPPOSITION AND PLO SOURCES NOT TO CARRY OFFICIAL US PRESS MATERIALS CRITICAL OF CURRENT PALESTINAIN ACTIONS. WE BELIEVE THIS REASON WHY OUR WF STORIES NOT APPEARING IN LOCAL PRESS.

6. COMMENT: BELIEVE FIRST FLUSH OF ANGUISHED REACTION TO ISRAELI RAID HAS NOW DIMINISHED TO ONE OF WAITING TO SEE THAT PLO WILL DO NEXT AGAINST ISRAEL AND THE US. MOROCCAN MEDIA HAVE NOT GONE SO FAR AS TO CALL FOR VIOLENT ACTIONS AGAINST AMERICANS AS SOME OTHER ARAB MEDIA HAVE DONE, BUT THROUGH UNBALANCED REPORTS APPEARING IN PRESS, THERE IS BEELING AMONG MAJORITY OF MOROCCAN JOURNALISTS THAT US WAS SOMEHOW INVOLVED WITH RAID ON BEIRUT. WE SENSE AN ATTITUDE OF DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT AMONG EDITORS AND PUBLISHERS THAT THE US DID NOT TAKE AN OFFICIAL STAND AGAINST ISRAELI ACTION IN LEBANON.

7. ABOVE COORDINATED WITH EMBASSY.
BEHRENS

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